

out multiple pages of documentation to be eligible. Yet we know they already meet the criteria because they filled out that same or similar paperwork for the WIC program or SNAP or the low-income housing program, so many other places where they have continually documented the need for help they have in creating a wholesome family.

This bill also recognizes that hunger doesn't stop when the school bell rings. It improves afterschool and summer feeding programs, ensuring that children in afterschool programs are receiving full nutritious meals instead of the current snack they receive now.

This bill is about improving the lives of the next generation—and we have a short period to do so—whether it is in education or nutrition. I know for myself, my boys turn 14 this year. It is hard for me to believe they have grown so quickly. Yet if we think about it, we have a snapshot of time to affect the lives of these children. So if we don't do it this year, if we don't do it next year or the year after that, that child who was in kindergarten is now in third grade. They may have incorporated bad eating habits already or they haven't had nutritious food or they haven't received the basic skills they need in terms of reading and other things. That time in the life of a child is so important. We look at ourselves and the time it takes us to pass legislation. We have an enormous opportunity to affect a generation of Americans and make their lives better. This bill means we will ensure they are healthier.

It also means not saddling them with a financial burden they cannot afford. That is why I am very proud to say this bill is completely paid for and will not add one cent to the national debt that will be shouldered by the children. As we work to get this bill signed into law, I will make certain it is paid for, not only because it is the right thing to do for the country, it is the right thing to do for the children.

Unfortunately, there is a very real risk we will fail to seize this historic opportunity. As of today, we have a maximum of 23 legislative days remaining before the current child nutrition program expires on September 30. What many colleagues may fail to understand is that a simple extension of these programs will not be enough. Oftentimes we don't get our work done, and we simply say: Well, we will extend the current law until we can get it done. I pose to my colleagues: We have a good bill. We have an opportunity, a historic opportunity to make a difference. If we don't seize the opportunity, we will have to extend the current legislation. If we simply choose to extend the current program, we are locking in the status quo. We are locking in the rate we pay our school districts for school lunches and meal programs at 1973 levels.

What is more, each State will lose critical dollars they would have other-

wise received from this bill. Who will pay the price? Our children will pay the price for our inability to get this done, for our inaction and our unwillingness to take a simple few hours and get something done. Yet knowing what we stand to lose, I can't seem to convince enough folks around here how critically important it is for us to pass this bill. Again, all I am asking for is several hours, 8 hours, perhaps, at the most. I will continue to ask. I will continue to come down to the floor of the Senate until we make this investment in our children.

We have an opportunity to pass something real, something historic, something that is meaningful, that we have taken the regular order and gone through the committee process, that we have done what people want us to do. We have been transparent with our actions. We have paid for this legislation. We have done it in a bipartisan way. We have come up with something that is good and real for the children. We simply need to dedicate the time, the time out of our schedule to get this bill done.

I will relentlessly be pursuing my colleagues. I know they get tired of me, and I know I have become a pest. But when the day is done and we have finished our work, it is worthwhile to have been a pest for something that is such a great treasure to the Nation as our children. We can accomplish this goal on behalf of the children, if we set our minds to it.

This is a bill of which each and every Member can be proud. It is bipartisan, completely paid for and, much more, it provides commonsense solutions to addressing childhood hunger and obesity. In unanimously passing this bill, the Ag Committee made a commitment to the children. Now I ask this body to help us fulfill this commitment by dedicating only 8 hours to passing this historic legislation.

Is that too much to ask? Can we not dedicate those few hours to an effort that will change a generation for the better? I know hard-working parents in Arkansas and all across this great Nation do not think it is too much. There are other parents of school-aged children, like me, some of them who do not have the blessings or the means that I have to be able to care for my children or provide a healthy afterschool snack or to be able to make sure dinner is there for them in the evenings. Those parents love their children as much as I love mine, and they want to see us as a nation recognizing the value of their children to the future of this country.

So I will continue to be a pest. I will continue to badger my colleagues. I will continue to fight to see that this body does right by our kids and passes this legislation and improves the health of the next generation of great Americans.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Dakota.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

(The remarks of Mr. THUNE pertaining to the introduction of S. 3652 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

DISCLOSE ACT

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, even before the Supreme Court issued its disastrous opinion in *Citizens United*, the influence of large corporations and other powerful special interests in our electoral process was overwhelming. There is a reason why the middle class is disappearing and why poverty is increasing while the people on top are making out like bandits. One of the reasons is the enormous influence big money interests have over the political process and the way they are able to use that influence through campaign contributions and through lobbying efforts. They are all over the place. Whether it is Wall Street, the oil companies, the coal companies, the insurance companies, the drug companies, the military industrial complex, all these very powerful and wealthy special interests contribute huge amounts of money into the political process, making it harder and harder for the significant needs of working families to be heard outside the din and the power of big money.

So, in other words, before this Supreme Court decision on *Citizens United*, we already had a very bad situation. It was a situation in which it required enormous sums of money on the part of a candidate to run for office, a situation in which it became increasingly common for millionaires and billionaires to be the only candidates able to finance a Federal campaign without heavy reliance on contributions from corporate interests. It is no secret both political parties look very favorably on so-called self-funded candidates. They don't have to raise any money for those candidates because they are multimillionaires and they are billionaires; they can write their own checks—checks which are often very large—in order to run for the House of Representatives or especially the Senate.

So what we had before *Citizens United*, that disastrous Supreme Court decision, was already a very bad situation. But that decision made a horrendous situation even worse.